



JUST FOR US

FOCUS ON REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE & LGBT FAMILIES

Vol. 18 #1
2005

FOR PEOPLE WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND/OR TRANSGENDER PARENTS

HIS WISH: That Foster Parents Can Adopt

by Franke Alexandre *Frank wrote this letter to the editor to persuade Floridians to overturn the adoption ban there. Florida is the only state that currently bans same-sex couples from adopting children. Reprinted with permission from Florida Voices*



I have spent my entire life in the Florida foster-care system. I was born HIV-positive and lost my mother to AIDS soon after I was born. I never met my biological father. I was considered a baby with not much chance of being adopted because of my health condition. But someone

was looking out for me because when I was just 8 months old, two men who worked at the hospital where I was staying, took me home and became my foster parents. They loved me, fed me, disciplined me, taught me manners, took me to school, and made sure I took all my medication the whole time I was growing up. They did everything a parent should do and more. Today I'm 18 years old, healthy, finishing high school and preparing for college.

There was just one thing they couldn't give me – they couldn't be my legal parents. My dads couldn't adopt me because the state of Florida wouldn't let

them. Although I will always consider them my parents, the state of Florida does not. Florida prohibits gay people from adopting children, so I want people to know about the pain that this law has caused my family and many others.

I have three brothers and two sisters (one sister died when she was still young), and we're all foster kids. Most of my brothers and sisters were also born HIV-positive, so you can understand why my parents are very special to me and my siblings.

Today my parents live in Oregon, but my sister and I had to move back to Florida this past summer. The state of Florida said I had to come back before I turned 18 or they would cut off my financial support for school and my living expenses. That is when

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CHOOSING PARENTHOOD: Reflections of a Single Mom-to-Be

I have always known that there are two things I want to do. One is to make paintings, which I do, a lot. The other is to make babies. I've thought about having a child for many years. And now that I am 35 years old, I think about it constantly.

Two years ago, I decided I would have a baby, regardless of my personal relationship situation. With the support of those around me, I began to get curious about how that might happen. I am a straight single woman, living in New York City. As embarrassing as it is, Sex And The City is not such an exaggeration. I have dated about 6 zillion guys here, but haven't found the one for me. And as the days, weeks, months pass, the clock is ticking, loudly. Friends have married and had babies or been divorced, or both. And I have two cats and two jobs and make paintings. For many years I felt envy at friends whose lives seemed perfect. An echo of my childhood sense of difference (divorce, gay dad) I felt like a leper in this culture of matrimony. Like a failure, a loser and a reject. Like universal casting put me in the single girl role. And yet, when I look around and see all the other amazing single



women I know, suddenly I realize I am in good company. Ours is a generation working out what love means, what family means, what freedom means. In truth, it has been my connection to COLAGE which has led me to consider the idea of family with my heart, not from the picture on TV. Meeting LGBT parents who've struggled to have and keep their children against so many odds, and seeing what amazing children they produce, is an inspiration. And when one mom asked if I wanted kids, and I said "yes, but there's no man at the moment," she said "All you need is a credit card," and smiled.

Last year I found an organization called "Single Mothers By Choice." I am now a member and belong to their listserve. These are women, like myself, who cannot

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear COLAGERS,
Families, and
Friends,

With only a few months under way in 2006, this year is already proving to be a year full of challenges for those who care about social justice. In recent weeks, the Ohio House of Representatives introduced a bill to ban lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from serving as foster or adoptive parents (which many Ohioans swiftly resisted). South Dakota declared abortion to be illegal and Virginia introduced legislation that would prohibit doctors and other licensed health professionals from assisting unmarried women with becoming pregnant. We also are seeing connections between states where anti-gay activists and legislators are pushing to make adoption available only to married couples while simultaneously sinking millions of dollars into marriage promotion programs as a condition for children, youth and families to receive critical economic assistance. Each of these attacks on our civil rights have been made - supposedly - in the name of "children," "families," and "traditional values." As children and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender parent, our unique perspectives on what children truly need, what is really in our best interests, and what actually makes a family are sorely needed.

Although we anticipated some of the political developments of 2006 so far, they have made this issue of *Just For Us*, focusing on the intersections of LGBT Family Rights and Reproductive Justice, more timely than we ever imagined. As you read you will find the voices of COLAGERS who were born or brought into their LGBT families through a variety of means, including donor insemination, foster care, and domestic or international adoption. You will also gain insight into the ways government policies, laws and legislation directly impact our lives and how you can effectively change and improve them. The experiences shared by these youth and adults teach us that families can—and do—take many shapes and forms, all of which are equally valid, practical, and even desirable despite some people's immoral, unethical and dare I say genocidal attempts to equate 'gay parents' with 'bad parents' and thus forcibly prevent our families from existing and flourishing.

When people hear the terms: 'reproductive justice' or 'pro-choice' many think first of abortion. While protecting access to safe, legal, and funded abortions is important, the issue itself - and this issue of *Just For Us* - is actually much, much larger. For someone who does not want a child, reproductive justice might mean receiving accurate information about contraceptives, access to abortion, or freedom from gender stereotypes that pressure them into parenthood. For prospective parents, reproductive justice might mean sexual and

reproductive integrity, access to culturally competent health care, information and services to create a family through donor insemination or adoption, and protection from interference or discrimination by state agencies, health care professionals, and other institutions.

I believe reproductive justice for COLAGERS and our families means breaking down existing ideas about the way sexuality, marriage, and family are "supposed to be" connected. Over the course of one's lifetime, many of us may find ourselves sexually active or not, partnered or not, wanting children or not. Indeed, our lives highlight the role of relationship, choice, change, and diversity in creating families - all of which are queer family values to cherish.

With many overlapping concerns about governmental interference in the creation of families, I am reminded of a chant I have sung at pro-choice rallies: "Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Right to Decide." As the Executive Director of COLAGE and a second generation COLAGER starting to think about expanding my own family, it's important to me that the voices of youth and adults with LGBT parents are leaders in the overlapping movements for reproductive rights and the right of our families, and all families, to exist in peace and justice.

COLAGE

MISSION

COLAGE ENGAGES, CONNECTS, AND EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR CHILDREN OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND/OR TRANSGENDER PARENTS AND FAMILIES.

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WHAT DOES REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE MEAN TO COLAGE AND COLAGERS?

As you can see from this issue of *Just For Us*, reproductive justice means many things to different people, communities, and organizations. Based on the ideas of our contributors, staff discussion, and independent research, we came up with a few principles of reproductive justice for COLAGE and COLAGERS. Do you have any you would like to add? Send us your thoughts to JFU@colage.org.

1 Reproductive justice is not only an issue for women and girls, but also for men, transgender people, people of all sexual orientations, children, and families. Everyone has the right to make decisions about their body and have access to the resources they need to stay safe and healthy.

2 Our families deserve respect and recognition regardless of the number, gender, race, ethnicity or biological relationship of family members. Neither the government nor anyone else can tell us who does or doesn't "count" as family, or who is an acceptable parent based on gender identity or sexual orientation.

3 We must protect the ability of our families to come into being through whatever available methods best serve us, be it adoption, foster care, donor insemination, surrogacy, or heterosexual sex. The only thing that should prevent a caring and capable person from being a parent is their own decision to be childfree.

4 Choosing to be childfree includes the right to abortion and emergency contraception – safe, legal, and funded.

5 Whenever possible, children need open access to information about how we came to be. This includes information about our donor, surrogate, birth parents, and other siblings when and if available.

6 Children and adults must be able to explore our birth culture, country, or community, and to choose what kind of relationship, if any, to have with it. Curiosity about or identification with our origins is a healthy part of forming our identities. No one can tell us who we are or where we belong.

7 In order to make decisions that keep us safe and healthy, and understand how we came to be, we need complete and accurate information about human bodies and sexuality. Abstinence-only education doesn't meet our needs as children, especially as children of LGBT parents.

8 When the time comes, we want the ability to make decisions about when, whether, and how to form families and relationships of our own. We want our decisions and lives to be celebrated and embraced.

CAUSES IN COMMON!

COLAGE is a proud member of Causes in Common! Causes in Common is an organizing initiative of the LGBT Community Center in New York City that is creating a working alliance of LGBT liberation activists and reproductive rights activists. Causes in Common makes the connections between these two social justice movements and identifies ways we can work together toward shared goals. In the winter of 2004, COLAGE signed on to Causes in Common's pledge of commitment. In so doing, we joined dozens of organizations, including Family Pride, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce, the National Center for Transgender Equality, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and community centers and local organizations around the country. For more information about the Causes in Common initiative, or to see the full list of participating organizations, please visit www.causesincommon.org.



**causes
in common**
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE & LGBT LIBERATION



COLAGERS hang out with professional baseball player Joe Valentine, whose mom is a lesbian, at a recent event in Philadelphia.

EVERY FAMILY IS SPECIAL: Interview with Manlei

JFU: Who is in your family?

Manlei: I have two moms, a sister, and myself. I have three grandparents and a lot of cousins.

JFU: How was your family created?

Manlei: My moms met and they've been together for a long time. They wanted to adopt a child. They took a lot of time because a lot of countries wouldn't let my moms adopt because they were gay, and also because of the age of my mom. Penny adopted me and said she was single. And that's the same way they got my sister. Now I am adopted by both of them.

JFU: What do you want people to know about your family?

Manlei: A lot of people know that I have two moms. I think that everyone's families are special. I have two moms, and my family is special too.

JFU: What makes a family to you?

Manlei: Well, you don't really have to be a family. Some of our friends we consider family, you just have to love them and treat each other like family. You just have to love them sometimes.

JFU: How did you decide to start calling yourself Manlei?

Manlei: I thought it would be cool to use that name. That name would be a special name to have. The orphanage gave me that name. My biological mother probably gave me a name, but they weren't allowed to tell me anything about me, like my name. We just assumed that my birthday was December 2nd. But some think I was born in November because I have more Scorpio than Sagittarius, and because I act a little older.

JFU: Why is it important to you to go by Manlei?

Manlei: When I go by the name Emma, I forget, or I lose the bridge from where I was taken care of for 10 months when I was young. I want to acknowledge that time.

JFU: Do you ever think about your birth mom?

Manlei: I think about what she would have been like to have as a mother, but I really don't know anything about her. I would like to know about her. Maybe what her name was, what kind of person she was, just general things about who I came from.

JFU: Is there anything else you want

other people to know about you and your family?

Manlei: You should still think that you are special even though people might tease you and that a lot of people still love you, and you're just You. Who cares about what other people say?

JFU: What can parents with an adopted child do to help them be who they are?

Manlei: Treat them like normal kids, not like different, but still really special. Tell them, "You're not different, you're just special. If people make fun of you, ignore them...even though you don't know your mom, you are still really special."

Manlei is in 5th grade. She was adopted from China and now lives in Connecticut. She has worked and played with COLAGE at Family Week in Provincetown since 2004.



A HOME LIKE I HAD: INTERVIEW WITH CLAIRE KNIGHT

I always knew where I came from. It was never a lie to me. Until somebody tells you that the family you have is abnormal, you think it's fine and a great place to be.

When Claire Knight was born in 1976, there was already something unique about her. Her mother, an out lesbian, had used a sperm bank to assist in Claire's conception. Claire was possibly the first baby COLAGEr born in this way. At the time, sperm banks existed primarily to assist heterosexual, married couples with infertility problems - lesbians used their services under a shroud of secrecy, or not at all. Although much has changed in the thirty years since, some conservative extremists want to turn the clock back on reproductive and LGBT freedoms. In light of these developments, JFU asked Claire to talk about her experiences growing up and her views about what really makes a family.

JFU: Who is in your family?

Claire: Well, there is my mother by birth, Joan. My second mother is Nora. Nora was always a close friend of the family and she became involved with my mother and became my second mother when I was below hip height. Although they broke up when I was maybe 11, and didn't want to continue to be friends, Nora would come pick me up and I would go away to spend time with her. Nora had one daughter, Melanie, who is like an older sister to me. Melanie was adopted from Colombia. Melanie was someone I looked up to, and she was actually the one who got the thermos of sperm that was used to conceive me and brought it on the bus to my mom. Nora also had foster children a number of times, so later I would sometimes have foster brothers or sisters.

JFU: Your mom used donor insemination to conceive you in 1976. Can you tell our readers a little bit about what this process was like for her back then?

Claire: She was the first person we know of in the United States who was successful in getting a sperm bank to allow her access to sperm, which was only supposed to be available to straight couples having trouble conceiving. As a single woman and as a lesbian woman she was the first. At that time it was not easy to do. It came down to her getting a guy who was the director of a sperm bank to believe that she would be a good parent, and then getting the hospitals, the clinic, the nurses...everyone who would be involved, she had to prove herself. Every single step was challenging. I really want to

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FUN PAGE

for kids with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents

Queerspawn Word Find

Can you find the words listed below in the Queerspawn Word Find! Use a pencil to circle every word that you can find. Send your completed puzzle to COLAGE by May 15th, 2006 and be entered into a drawing to win a fabulous COLAGE prize!

WORDS

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| activism | gay |
| adoption | justice |
| babies | leadership |
| bisexual | lesbian |
| choice | parents |
| COLAGE | pen pal |
| everywhere | pride |
| family | queer |
| flag | queerspawn |
| freedom | rainbow |
| friends | second gen |
| fun | transgender |

L A P N E P P A R E N T S
 O E B E C I O H C W A Y E
 F L A G Y L I M A F A S N
 E S A D R E I P P G C L N
 R E D N E G S N A R T D I
 A I D O R R M I N Y I D E
 I B I C E E S E B A V D T
 N A J E H S E H H D I M E
 B B U S W E D U I O S O E
 O Q S C Y U G N Q P M D U
 W S T A R F W A E T O E G
 B B I S E X U A L I G E G
 S O C G V U R N N O R R U
 W O E L E S B I A N C F F

SPEAK OUT

How did your family come to be? What is the hardest thing about being from a family created that way? What is the best thing about the way your family came to be?

Caroline, 15 Newton, MA My two moms had me through anonymous donor insemination, and my 3 younger sisters are all adopted. I really love the way my family is because I've grown up in a multiracial family, and it's taught me a lot about racial politics. The hardest thing about being born through donor insemination is that I will never know who my biological father is, and I will never what genes he passed on to me, or if we have any of the same interests.

A.J, 10 Hopewell Junction, NY My name is A.J. Knickerbocker. My family came to be by divorce. Then my mom met Deb. She moved in with us. The hardest thing about my family is going back and forth between my home and my dad's home. The best thing is getting twice as many presents on my birthday and Christmas.

Jessie, 17 Fort Wayne, IN My big gay family came to be when my two moms had their union and wanted to have a child. They were friends with my dad so they had me through artificial insemination. My dad also met his partner a couple months before I was born, so I've had all four parents all my life. It's cool to have so many people who you know care about you. And it's always fun to see the look on any non-COLAGERS face when I try and explain how my family came to be.

Jordan, 12 Pomona, NY Hello, my name is Jordan. My family happened by my mom and dad getting a divorce when I was 3-4 years of age. My mom is with Jenn, her girlfriend. The hardest thing about my family is that if I told my friends, I told my very close friends and they didn't care but my other friends that are Catholic may reject that and then not be my friends anymore. The best thing about my mom having a lesbian lover is that Jenn and I have lots of common things with each other.

QUEER YOUTH ADVOCACY DAY: COLAGERS Take On The California Legislature and Hundreds of Anti-Gay Protesters



Opal, from the San Francisco COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program, testifies about her experiences as the child of lesbian moms at Advocacy Day.

COLAGE joined activists from GSA Network and Equality California, bringing hundreds of youth from around California to Queer Youth Advocacy Day in Sacramento on March 6, 2006. COLAGERS, LGBT students, and allies talked to lawmakers about what it's really like for LGBTQ students and people with LGBTQ parents in California schools. Using their skills of persuasion, leadership, and public speaking, youth lobbied for safer schools legislation & help to end discrimination and harassment for all students in California. For more information about safe schools organizing, or to find out about the pending bills affecting student safety in California, go to www.casafeschoolscoalition.org

A Home Like I Had, continued from page 4

meet and thank the guy who ran the sperm bank, because my mom didn't lie to him, she was open that she was a lesbian and he said that he needed to look at the legal ramifications, and that no other sperm bank had done this. He decided it was a moral issue, not a legal issue. He had the power to decide whether or not I should exist, a daughter of this person in front of him. He met with her in person and said that he thought she would make a really good parent, that she wanted me, and could love me, and was committed to me, and he was willing at that time to go against the prevailing wisdom and see her as a person and potential mother and not just a frightening lesbian. I'm glad she didn't give up, that she kept trying.

JFU: Did you tell friends and classmates about your family? If so, what kinds of reactions did you get?

Claire: I always knew where I came from. It was never a lie to me. So I always felt comfortable with it. Until somebody tells you that the family you have is abnormal, you think it's fine and a great place to be. Later, when I found out people in my town thought it was immoral, and bad, and twisted, and wrong, then I decided maybe I didn't want to go around talking about it anymore. So, my mom and I talked and we came up with the story that my father had died before I was born, which metaphorically is true in that the concept of father that most people think of as father, died before I was born. It was never part of my life at all.

The reality is that when kids are young it's hard for somebody to explain donor insemination – especially when you live in a town where adults don't want their kids to even know where babies come from. Sometimes I would get in trouble for telling friends about where I came from because I had ended up telling them the facts of life before their parents had. Even when I tell people now, as an adult, it tends to interrupt a small talk conversation. There goes the chance to talk about your apartment or whatever you really wanted to talk about.

JFU: A lot of parents have fears about using a known sperm donor. Do you think it's important for children to be able to choose to meet their donor, or seek out other people who may have been conceived using the same donor?

Claire: I've personally never felt like I wanted to know. If I'd had my family break apart or lost someone at a young age, I might feel like something was missing, but I never had that. You can be a complete person experiencing all those qualities even without knowing.

At the same time, as I've gotten older, it does make me wonder, when my friends say, "you know, you look EXACTLY like so and so!" and I would think, well, maybe we **are** related. Maybe I'm walking past half-siblings all the time and don't know it.

I know I share physical things with my mother.

It would be cool to see how those traits got expressed in a different person, who had a different upbringing, etc. It's not that I want a father, or more brothers and sisters, but that I'm interested to see what it turns out like.

When I called the sperm bank to ask about meeting people who had the same donor, they said it was possible, so I might do that.

JFU: As you know, one of the reasons we are highlighting different ways of making a family in this issue of JFU is that several states are considering laws that would make it harder for gay and lesbian people to adopt or foster children, or use donor insemination or surrogacy to have children. What is your reaction to these kinds of new laws?

Claire: When they talk about foster parents and not allowing foster kids to be in GLBT families, it really hits home for me. I think about these awful foster families that some of the kids I knew had been in, these supposedly "normal and traditional" families. Then I think of my mother and how she gave them love and safety and I just hate to think about them having to go back or be out on the street. Everyone deserves a home like I had, where they are loved and protected.

Claire has attended Family Week and is a long-time COLAGE NYC coordinator and volunteer.

AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT ADOPTION: INTERVIEW WITH KEOTT GOMEZ-STARNES

JFU: How did your family come to be?

Keott: In 1994 my parents adopted me and it was slightly difficult for them. I was 4 and a half. Six years later in 1998 they adopted my little brother Dylan. My family is me, and my little brother, and we're both Black, and then my dads, Floyd who is white and Carlos who is Hispanic.

JFU: Did your dads encounter any problems with adopting you and your brother?

Keott: For my adoption, it took several years for the judge to sign the adoption papers. If you don't have a judge sign the papers then the birth family can come back and try to say they want me back. When Dylan was adopted it was a much faster process. One, we had a different judge, and two, things had gotten, not necessarily better, but there had been some improvement in attitudes.

JFU: Do you feel that you and your brother have had different experiences because of these changing attitudes?

Keott: The times have changed through middle and elementary school. People are a little more accepting now. I personally had to go through a lot more in middle school because of having gay parents. But he's probably still going to come up through different encounters in school.

JFU: What is your school like?

Keott: My school is very diverse, there are lots of African-American kids and Hispanic kids. We get to pick which high school we go to and the school system tries to make it so that there is not one certain race bigger than the others and



that people are equally spread around.

JFU: What is the most common question people ask you about your family?

Keott: People ask me, "Is that really your family?" I just say that I was adopted and that sums it up for a lot of people.

JFU: How do people react when you tell them you were adopted by two dads?

Keott: If I just say I was adopted it's ok, but if I say I have gay parents some people think it's weird and other people think it's fine.

JFU: What do you like best about your family?

Keott: We're funny and I think that we're a very loving family.

JFU: What would you want people who weren't adopted to know about what it's like?

Keott: I would want them to know that people get adopted for lots of different

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LOVE TRUMPS LAW AND BIOLOGY

by Alice Ruby

My mom and dad were activists when I was a child. We spent many weekends going to demonstrations downtown or benefit concerts in the park. I heard stories of my mother marching in pro-choice rallies carrying signs reading "every child a wanted child" while pregnant with me in 1968.

It was not until I was an adult that I understood the reproductive health issue my mother faced as a feminist, lesbian/bi woman who wanted children in the late 1960's. One of my mom's oldest friends was the person to tell me the truth as she casually mentioned that my mom married my dad because she wanted to have children. Or perhaps it was just the first time it sunk in. I suddenly saw my mom, who had always identified as bisexual but



never dated men after my father, and her choices, in a new light. Her reproductive choices had been very limited—marry a man or don't have children. Donor insemination and adoption were not options available to her.

I am now Executive Director of The Sperm Bank of California, a non-profit sperm bank that was the first to provide services to out lesbians and single women starting in 1982. I see access to fertility services and sperm banks as part of the continuum of reproductive rights. Choosing to have children, or not to have children, should be each person's option. If you choose children, I believe having your family socially and legally recognized regardless of the number and gender of the parents is a fundamental human right. Growing up my family included my parents, my brother Christopher who was adopted before I was born, our foster brother Carlos who lived with us for a couple of years, and, as time wore on, various girlfriends of my parents. I learned early that love trumps law and biology when it comes to what truly makes families.

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REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, LGBT LIBERATION, AND THE SUPREME COURT



If you've been following the news in the last six months or so, you have probably heard about the changes to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is the highest court of the land, and has the final say on whether state and federal laws are constitutional. If a law is decided to be unconstitutional then either the law, or the constitution itself, must change. In the past year, two Supreme Court justices retired and were replaced with conservative nominees John Roberts and Samuel Alito. Although no one can know for sure how Roberts and Alito will rule on upcoming cases their records indicate that many of the precedents that have formed the basis of our guarantees to reproductive and sexual freedoms may be in danger.

You may be wondering what reproductive and sexual freedom have to do with each other. Legally, they actually have a very close relationship. In almost every case involving some aspect of reproduction or sexuality, the idea of 'the right to privacy' has been invoked. The court has made many different, sometimes

contradictory, decisions regulating aspects of sexuality and reproduction from sex itself to sterilization, conception, contraception, pregnancy, adoption and child-rearing. Advocates for expanding LGBT civil liberties and reproductive autonomy have argued that "privacy" includes the right to make decisions about intimate relationships and whether or not to bear children. In the case of LGBT families, these two decisions are one and the same: LGBT parents want and need the right to BOTH enter into a relationship of their choice AND parent children if they so choose. Thus, the fate of LGBT families cannot be separated from the right to privacy or the principles of reproductive justice.

With South Dakota's recent move to ban abortion, a direct challenge to Roe v. Wade is imminent. As more and more decisions - including Roe - come up for scrutiny, there is a very real risk that the legal philosophies that have expanded opportunities for LGBT families to exist will be undermined or reversed by the new court. As COLAGers it is important to know how we are impacted by these changes so that we can continue to advocate for ourselves and our families no matter what the new court may bring.

Only a few relevant and well-known cases are discussed here. If you want to find out more about the constitution or the Supreme Court, or to read the full text of the decisions made in these and other cases, check out www.FindLaw.com.

SUPREME COURT CASES THAT EXPANDED REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL FREEDOM

1965
Griswold v Connecticut At the time, many states outlawed the use or distribution of contraceptive devices. The court decided that, due to the personal and intimate nature of marriage, married couples should be able to make decisions about contraception without interference or intrusion from the state.

"We deal with a right of privacy older than the Bill of Rights - older than our political parties, older than our school system. Marriage is a coming together for better or for worse...and intimate to the degree of being sacred."

1972
Eisenstadt v Baird The court expanded their decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut* to apply to both married and unmarried persons.

"If...the distribution of contraceptives to married persons cannot be prohibited, a ban on distribution to unmarried persons would be equally impermissible".

1973
Roe v Wade The court determined that restrictions on abortion during the first trimester violated a pregnant individual's right to privacy. The court allowed that some restrictions on abortion during the second and third trimester of pregnancy may be constitutional.

"This right of privacy...is broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. The detriment that the State would impose upon the pregnant woman by denying this choice altogether is apparent."

2003
Lawrence v Texas The court overturned its ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick*

"To say that the issue in Bowers was simply the right to engage in certain sexual conduct demeans the claim the individual put forward, just as it would demean a married couple were it said that marriage is just about the right to have sexual intercourse. The liberty protected by the Constitution allows homosexual persons the right to choose to enter upon relationships in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons."

SUPREME COURT CASES THAT RESTRICT REPRODUCTIVE AND SEXUAL FREEDOM

1927
Buck v Bell The court upheld the practice of involuntary sterilization for people who are mentally or physically disabled. At the time, homosexuality was still considered a mental disorder, and persons confined to mental hospitals for homosexuality and other sex "crimes" were often sterilized.

"It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind."

1986
Bowers v Hardwick The court refused to see 'homosexuals' as people who are in relationships and families, deserving of the right to privacy, and upheld state laws criminalizing sodomy.

"The Constitution does not confer a fundamental right upon homosexuals to engage in sodomy. None of the fundamental rights announced in this Court's prior cases involving family relationships, marriage, or procreation bear any resemblance to the right asserted in this case."

2009
Lofton v. Secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services The court declined to review a case that challenged Florida's ban on adoption by same-sex couples.

"The decision to adopt a child is not a private one, but a public act. At a minimum, would-be adoptive parents are asking the state to confer official recognition...on a relationship where there exists no natural..bond."



REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES: The Flip Side by Ryn Gluckman

Artificial insemination. In vitro fertilization. Sperm donation. Egg donation. Fertility drugs. On paper these terms seem too technical to have anything to do with love or connection or family. But many COLAGErs have these assisted reproductive technologies to thank for the creation of our own families. They have allowed lesbians to become pregnant and gay men to rear children genetically related to them. Their popularity in the queer community speaks to a deep need some people feel to raise children who are related by blood. Even cloning, however far off it may be, has made its way onto the list of technologies that might eventually benefit LGBTQ parents. Assisted reproductive technologies have added to the diverse family structures that COLAGErs are so proud of and demonstrate that no matter where a child comes from, it's love that makes a family.



But while these technologies can be seen as providing a broader array of “personal choices” for queer folks looking to become parents, there is a flip side to this reproductive coin. While the technologies themselves seem to be relatively neutral, the costs surrounding them, who they are advertised to, and the public policies regulating them come with fine-print ideas about who should be a parent, who shouldn't, and why. The cost of reproductive technology has often left poor and working class queer people in the dust in terms of raising a family. Reproductive rights, disability and racial justice activists have pointed out that payment for sperm and egg donation raises ethical questions about who gives up their fertility and who benefits. While reproductive technologies are hailed as expanding the possibility for queer parenting, other public policy restricts the parenting possibilities for the poor disabled people and people of color, including many queer folks. Before embracing these technologies as an expansion of personal choice, we should take a look at how they affect the entirety of our community, and other communities as well.

WHO GETS IT...AND WHO DOESN'T

While more assistance becomes available to potential parents who can afford it, there is a consistent effort to keep certain populations from having children. The advances in reproductive technologies are mirrored in the advances in risky hormonal contraceptives and welfare policies that limit the amount of children a woman can have and encourage heterosexual marriage. Nonconsensual sterilizations and the administration of contraceptives like Depo Provera and Norplant have a long history in African American, Native American, immigrant, and disabled communities. While it is unethical to administer contraceptives without a woman's consent, they are heavily promoted in poor communities and communities of color, and often prescribed without the patient's full understanding of their serious side-effects (which sometimes include infertility). New sterilization methods and campaigns are being developed and marketed constantly to poor women in America and abroad. The C.R.A.C.K. campaign in the U.S.,

for example, has advocated paying women who are drug users \$200 to be sterilized...instead of devoting those resources to drug treatment, education, and poverty relief. Then there is the long history of discouraging disabled people from raising children, based on the assumption that people with disabilities are inadequate caregivers.

QUEER FAMILIES AND REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

What does all of this have to do with queer families and reproductive technologies? It shows us that while some people are encouraged to have children, others are not, and the distinction often falls along race, class, and ability lines. We have a tendency to assume that because new reproductive technologies serve some in the queer community, they serve all and that all queer people have access to them. Working class, queers of color, and young queer people do not have the same choices that white, older, or more affluent queer people make.

Does this mean we should completely reject assisted reproductive technologies? Absolutely not! We, as COLAGErs, know better than anyone that we need all the help we can get having and keeping our families together. However, we might want to approach these technologies, and further reproductive medicine, with caution. They do not exist in a vacuum, but are part of larger cultural ideas about who should be supported to have children.

More often than not, queer people have fallen into the category of those deemed inappropriate to raise families. Even now, legislation is being considered in Virginia to ban the insemination of unmarried women by licensed health professionals. Rather than fully embrace each new technology as a new way of creating families, we might want to ally ourselves with those who have been kept from having children and advocate for equal access when it comes to the technologies that already exist. Understanding the race, ability, class, and age dynamics of reproductive technologies before making a choice about having children is one way to do this. Taking a stand against risky contraceptives, coercive welfare policy, and standing up for universal health insurance and pre and post natal care for everyone is another. The biggest lesson that reproductive technologies and policies offer the queer community is that how we have children will no doubt shape the world that they grow up in.

Ryn Gluckman is a 2nd Generation COLAGEr. S/he is a reproductive rights activist, a writer and nursing student Ryn lives and works in Western Massachusetts. Ryn has worked for COLAGE as an intern and volunteered on our national board of directors.

Learn More

The Center for Genetics and Society: genetics-and-society.com
Council for Responsible Genetics: gene-watch.org
Committee on Women, Population, and the Environment: cwpe.org
American Society for Reproductive Medicine: asrm.org

As a lesbian in my late 30's, not to mention in my line of work, I am surrounded by women deciding whether or not to become parents. Women have greater professional and educational opportunities than ever before. This often results in delayed decisions regarding children. Women and men of all sexual orientations are facing increasing fertility issues related to the biological fact that conception becomes more difficult for women over 35. This is another aspect of reproductive rights that I wasn't aware of when I was younger. Yes, many women over 35 have children, and for many of them it is a difficult, emotional, and expensive process.

Fertility services are considered elective by most insurance companies and often only partially covered or not covered at all. Additionally, many lesbians and single women face difficulties finding healthcare providers who are friendly to diverse families. In California, there is an ongoing court case against a physician who refused to provide reproductive services to a lesbian stating it was against her religion. At least 2 state legislatures considered laws last year that would prevent physicians from inseminating unmarried women. We ship sperm to women in Europe who have to leave their home countries to find services because laws prohibit doctors from assisting them. Even more complex are

the barriers facing two men who want to have a child who is biologically related to one of them. Surrogacy is not as common or as simple as the news would lead you to believe. It is also extremely expensive, combining the costs of adoption and assisted reproduction.

When I was in college and marched on Washington with tens of thousands to protect a woman's right to choose abortion, we used to say that reproductive rights were a women's issue. Now, I see reproductive rights as a human issue that includes a continuum of decisions regarding if, when, and how to have children.

One of the human issues that is often overlooked in discussions of fertility or donor conception are the rights of the children. Part of my job is speaking with young adults who seek identifying information about their donors. Through our pioneering Identity-Release® Program, many of our sperm donors have agreed to be identifiable to adult offspring. This program was developed in direct response to requests from lesbians and single women who wanted an option for their children to learn more about their donors. While each youth's situation is unique, some themes are common. Our research shows that donor-conceived individuals are curious about their donors. Learning more about their donors is a way

for them to learn more about themselves. Even after 23 years, this is a radical notion in the world of donor insemination. Sperm banks are increasingly moving toward open identity donation programs. However, the majority of children born through donor insemination still are not told the truth about their conception.

My personal and professional experiences have taught me that reproductive rights, like marriage rights and adoption rights, are critical for the formation and support of LGBT families. LGBT parents, like all parents, make choices they feel are in the best interests of their child(ren) or their future child(ren). Lesbian moms and single moms started the movement from secrecy to disclosure in donor insemination because they were thinking of their children. Today's donor-conceived youth, the first generation to grow up knowing the facts of their conception, are bringing important new voices and perspectives to the dialogue. I am proud to be part of an organization that is listening not just to LGBT parents but to their children as well.

Alice Ruby is a second-generation lesbian and Executive Director of The Sperm Bank of California, the global pioneer in donor openness and serving diverse families. TSBC is also the only sperm bank conducting research on the psycho-social outcomes of donor insemination. You can visit them at www.thespermbankofca.org

reasons. People have lots of different reasons why they have to give a baby up for adoption, and people also have a lot of reasons why they might want to adopt.

JFU: Do you know your birth family?

Keott: I met my mother's parents. A few years ago I found out that my mother had passed away and I had two grandparents who live in northwest DC and my sister lives with them. I thought it was really good to meet them, to see where I came from and meet the other half of my family. It was good for them to meet me, to see how much I'd grown and to see that I was alright. I still talk to them every once in awhile and I go over to their house sometimes.

JFU: Has it been important for you to know other people from families like yours?

Keott: You need to know that you're not the

only person, you're not the only kid whose family had to give them up. Anybody who doesn't have connections to people like them they might feel angry or feel like "why am I the only one?" Having connections can really help you out in dealing with your problems and making it so you don't feel sad.

JFU: In 2006, several states are considering laws that would prohibit same-sex couples or unmarried persons from adopting children - what do you think about this kind of legislation?

Keott: I think that this is totally wrong. Any couple, no matter if they're gay or lesbian or

transgender, should be able to adopt kids. Any two loving people are capable of raising kids in different types of environments. I don't think it's fair. There's a lot of kids out there that need a good home. To say that straight people can only give that is really wrong.

*Keott, 17, is from Silver Spring, MD, and got involved with COLAGE four years ago when he started attending Family Week. Keott is defensive tackle on his school's varsity football team and also wrestles. He is involved in his school's Gay-Straight Alliance, and is featured in COLAGE's youth-created photo-text and art exhibit, *That's So Gay*.*



SPAWN TALK

by Abigail Garner

Coming Out as Childfree

I knew I was different when I was five. I just didn't have the words for it. When

I played house with the neighbor girls I never wanted to be the wife. I wanted to be the husband who headed off to work. The sing-song tale fed to little girls ("someday when you grow up, and you get married and have kids...") made me want to run screaming from the room.

By eighth grade, when I figured out why I felt different, I carefully chose people I trusted to tell them my revelation. Some dismissed my differentness, telling me: "You're not serious; you'll change your mind." Others tried to pathologize it: "What happened in your childhood that was so terrible to make you this way?" I was in college when I told my mother, and our relationship endured several emotionally rocky years since we couldn't have a conversation without her bringing it up and belittling or mocking me, saying things like "That's just not normal. You're choosing a life of loneliness." Regardless of whatever judgmental comments I hear, I have learned that I cannot change who I am at my very core. I am childfree.

If my declaration doesn't seem significant to you, then you are not of the gender nor the age range that leaves you wide open for nearly daily jokes in the

straight world about the tick-tick-tick of your biological clock. Combine that with the LGBT parenting community's laser focus on making it possible for people to conceive or acquire little ones and my choice seems all the more alien. When beaming new parents ask me how many I would like to have, I could swear they grip their infants just a little closer to their chests when I tell them I'm content with zero.

Sure, I could avoid those awkward infant-clutching moments, and continue to pleasantly smile and nod when countless parents reassure me that I shouldn't worry because I still "have time," or when they give me the proverbial pat on the head when they announce I will "understand when I have kids of [my] own."

But omission of the whole truth is not an acceptable option for me when it feels like I'm lying. When I was in my early twenties, few parents even brought up my future in childrearing, so dodging the question wasn't that big of a deal. Many couldn't even grasp that I was old enough to drink. But ten years later, I'm creeping up to age milestones that will silently label me as bitterly childless. I see their looks of pity that I don't mean to invite, and their apologetic expressions when

I'm asked if I have kids. When I say nothing, I am presumed to personify the stereotype of an unmarried straight girl who "isn't getting any younger" who cries herself to sleep with visions of shriveling ova dancing in her head. I believe that people are either wired to be parents or they are not. Profound loss occurs when those who are wired for parenthood never realize their dream (think Frida Kahlo) and tragedies occur when people who are not wired to parent have children anyway (remember Andrea Yates?).

It is the undeniable drive to become parents that I witness within LGBT family networks which reinforces my awareness that I am not wired with that same drive. I'm told by starry-eyed parents that once I have kids "of my own" my instinct will kick in and I'll make a great parent. Maybe. But that's not a gamble I'm willing to take.

With over half a million kids in foster care in the U.S., obviously that instinct doesn't magically kick in for everybody. Reproductive justice means that every child is loved and wanted by parents who want to be parents. A critical step to realizing that vision is respecting non-parenthood that happens by choice, not just by chance. ▲

Abigail Garner is the author of Families Like Mine. Her blog, "Damn Straight" is online at www.AbigailGarner.net.

COLAGE IN LOS ANGELES

Program Director Meredith Fenton brought COLAGE's dynamic youth programming to *Parenting with Pride*, an LGBT Family Conference and Resource Fair sponsored by the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center's Family Services Program and the Pop Luck Club. Over 20 youth were joined by volunteer adult COLAGERS for workshops on coming out, handling homophobia and bullying, and developing public speaking and activism skills.

COLAGE relies on adults with one or more LGBT parents to create a fun, safe atmosphere in which youth are supported and empowered. Many thanks to our adult COLAGE volunteers who joined us in Los Angeles:

Morgan Early Amanda Kelly Marisa Smith

In 2006, COLAGE programming will be an important part of many exciting conferences and events around the country. To find out if COLAGE will be in your area, check out page 15 for more information about our upcoming events. or visit www.colage.org/programs/events



Volunteer facilitator Morgan Early with young COLAGERS (from left to right) Imani, Gilbert, and Cassandra.

LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK: 2006

THE GOOD

Arkansas: COLAGE submitted an Amicus brief in the ACLU's case asking the Arkansas Supreme Court to uphold a lower court ruling that struck down a state ban that prohibits gay adults -- or anyone living in the same household as a gay adult -- from becoming a foster parent.

Florida: The House and Senate are considering bills that would allow gay Floridians to adopt under certain circumstances. If passed, these bills would reverse the most severe anti-gay adoption legislation in the country.

Maryland: A state circuit court ruled in January that it's illegal to deny same-sex couples marriage equality under the state's constitution as it's currently written. Republicans are rallying to amend the constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman.

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT ALL THIS?

Join COLAGE's Speak Out program! You can join fellow COLAGERS speaking to media, legislators, and local communities about equality for all families. Check out www.colage.org/programs/youth

THE BAD

Arizona, California, Minnesota, New Hampshire and Wisconsin: Don't they know that marriage bans are SO 2004??? This year, at least these five states will consider constitutional amendments making only marriage between a man and a woman legal. New Hampshire, Wisconsin, and California's proposed amendments would also eliminate domestic partnership and civil unions in those states.

Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Utah and Tennessee: In what appears to be a new wave of anti-adoption legislation, each of these states is considering measures that would prohibit same-sex couples from adopting children. Other states (up to 16) are likely to follow.

Indiana: Two bills would have Indiana law declare that marriage is preferred, encouraged and supported over any other domestic relationship. Additionally, they would require that public schools not allow instruction that is contrary to policies established by law concerning marriage. These bills would affect a number of state programs, including welfare, adoption and foster care.

Virginia: Lawmakers introduced HB 187, which would prohibit doctors and other licensed health professionals from assisting unmarried women with becoming pregnant. Although obviously an attack on lesbians trying to create families, the bill would limit the reproductive options of all women and is one of the inspirations for this issue of JFU!

Single Mom by Choice, continued from page 1

imagine NOT having a baby and are venturing to go it alone, either through pregnancy or adoption. Their philosophy includes this statement, which warmed my heart:

The word "choice" in our title has two implications: we have made a serious and thoughtful decision to take on the responsibility of raising a child by ourselves, and we have chosen not to be in a relationship rather than be in one that does not seem satisfactory.

In recent years it has dawned on me that while I may be single, at least I am not in a harmful relationship, and that for this I can be grateful. And when thinking about raising a child, the thought of divorcing the child's father is far worse to me than raising the child on my own. I suffered through my parents divorce as a child, and would hate to bring that flavor of crazy to my own kid. No doubt I'll give them crazy, but hopefully it will be a healthy obsession with shoes or a righteous indignation towards social injustice.

As this article heads to the printer, the Republicans of South Dakota have moved forward in disempowering women from making decisions about whether to be mothers or not. Undoubtedly, these same people would think that I am deprived for considering putting anonymous sperm inside me to have a baby who'd have no Dad. But I know better. I know that what a child needs is love, support, nurturing and laughter. I know that a child needs community, understanding, warmth and boundaries. I know I would rock as a mom, with or without a partner. And I know that what we call Plan A (the mom, dad, dog, fence, baby) is only one option and not always the best one. It just looks good in the movies and goes well with sappy music.

So I sit on my 35 year old behind, on this fence, wondering how it will all play out. Will I call my doctor today and say "Yes," or will I give the guy I've been dating some more time? Will I wait too long and not be able to get pregnant? Will I do it too soon and never have enough money?

If I do have a baby, will I ever fall in love? Will it be unfair to the kid? Will I hold it against her? Will I ever sleep again? Will my envy of the perfect people increase or will I cease to care because a beautiful creature will come into my life? And who in the world will do the laundry?

And then my best friend with two kids tells me I will be a great mother, that I will figure it all out and that she'll always be there for me. And then I hear the collective excitement from the COLAGE Family Week staff (my little sisters and brothers) when I tell them I am thinking about it. And then my own mother, without skipping a beat says, "when?" And I know as long as the decision is really truly mine, it will be the right one.

Jenny Laden, 35, grew up in Philadelphia and now lives in Brooklyn. Her fabulous gay father, Richard, died in 1996 from AIDS. She has volunteered at Family Week since 2001, and is proud and grateful to be a part of COLAGER community. She is an artist and teacher.

THE FLORIDA ADOPTION BAN: New Film Exposes Harm to Children and Families

If you would like to learn more about Frank Alexandre (see page 1), his foster siblings, and thousands of other children in the child welfare system in the state of Florida, *We Are Dad* is a good place to start. Originally aired on Showtime, *We Are Dad* is the story of Steve and Roger Lofton-Croteau, who acted as foster fathers for six HIV-infected children in Florida and Oregon. Despite demonstrating excellent parenting abilities (including the enormous task of overseeing HIV treatment for the children), Steve and Roger were prohibited by the state of Florida from adopting one of their children when his HIV status reversed, therefore making him eligible for adoption. As Frank describes in his editorial (see p. 1), his life and the lives of several of his foster siblings were repeatedly disrupted by a State that made its decisions based on homophobia, bigotry, and fundamentalism instead of upholding its mission to provide children with secure, stable, and loving families.

In many ways, *We Are Dad* is a really timely film during a year in which numerous states are considering new measures to restrict or prohibit adoption by LGBT people. By illustrating the detrimental effects of such restrictions on the children and parents in this exceptional family, *We Are Dad* is a powerful piece that shows the humanity of our families.

I was disappointed by some points in

the film in the way that gay adoption advocates failed to consider the entire political context in which adoption and foster care take place. During one particularly complicated and painful portion of the film, a family friend of the Lofton-Croteaus recalls being accosted in the grocery store by a white woman yelling, "Where's their mother? Where's their mother?" He finally responded, "She was a crackwhore, and now she's dead."

While the woman's response accurately illustrates the upsetting challenges that multi-racial families often face when a parent and child are not the same race and are questioned as legitimate family members, I found myself even more upset by the response of this white, gay man. Resorting to racist and classist assumptions about birth parents, whose choices are often strongly affected by economic realities created by our government, only contributes to a climate of hostility to anyone that does not fit the stereotypical nuclear family mold (whether LGBT or straight). Birth parents are often implied to be irresponsible or uncaring and it is rare that their actions are considered in the larger context of chronic under- and unemployment, violence against women, or slashes to social welfare programs.

The LGBT community should know all too well the pain of watching people die of



AIDS because their lives were considered 'immoral' and undeserving of help or attention.

As a queerspawn, I also would have loved to see the voices of the children of the family be more integral to the telling of the story. I was disappointed to not hear directly from the mouths of the five youth their experiences of discrimination.

Despite these critiques, the story of the Lofton-Croteau family is a powerful COLAGE narrative and *We Are Dad*, which has been recently nominated for a GLAAD media award, is a successful tool for sharing this compelling story and illustrating the ill-effects on families and children of homophobia and governmental discrimination.

For more information about We Are Dad, or to order the film, visit www.WeAreDad.com. Half of all proceeds from sales of the film go directly to support the family. To learn more about the ongoing legal challenges in this case, visit www.LetHimStay.com.

His Wish, continued from page 1

my life went into turmoil. I was taken away from the only family I had ever known right before my senior year of high school. I was forced to quit my job and leave behind all of my friends in order to move in with a new foster family in Fort Lauderdale. But the new family couldn't keep me for more than a few months, so I was left without many options. I was terrified that I might have to go to a group home and have no foster parents. I started to experience nightmares and was feeling like I lost all control over my own life. I've always done well in school and been pretty happy, but right then, for the first time, I felt

extremely hopeless and all alone.

Fortunately, another couple, Anthony and Waymon, stepped in and took me into their home. They have been great to me and I'm doing much better now, but I still miss my parents and my brothers and sister.

The state of Florida had previously attempted to break up my family. A few years ago, the state attempted to take my brother Bert away from us and search for another family to adopt him. My parents went to court to adopt Bert, but were denied. The courts said that my parents could not adopt Bert because they were gay, even though they were the

only parents that Bert had ever known.

This year, the Florida Senate Committee on Children and Families will hopefully vote on a bill that would give my dads a chance to adopt me, my brothers, and my sister. The new law would let judges decide if an adoption was in the best interests of the children regardless of whether the parents are gay or lesbian. Words cannot express how important this is to me and my family -- it could really make our lives much better. I hope they will vote to give me, my brothers, my sister and many, many others the chance to be adopted.

COLAGE NOTES

IN MY SHOES UPDATE

COLAGE is thrilled to announce that in January 2006, we signed a distribution deal with Frameline for our documentary, *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents*. Partnering with Frameline will greatly increase the distribution of this important film allowing more audiences to see its message of awareness and family equality.

Since its debut in June 2005, this film has played in countless film festivals around the country, screened at COLAGE events and chapter meetings, and has already been used in successful educational efforts in schools and communities by COLAGE members. This 30 minute documentary film was produced by the COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program and directed by Jen Gilomen.

"I'm very excited to have Frameline represent *In My Shoes*," shared Maura King, Frameline Distribution Director. "This documentary represents a vital piece of our growing LGBT community—children of LGBT parents—and goes the extra mile by incorporating their voices and talents directly into the production. COLAGE has done a wonderful service by offering this opportunity to youth, and we here at Frameline look forward to making sure this work reaches film festivals, schools and individuals in the US and beyond."

In addition to this exciting distribution deal, *In My Shoes* has continued to play at film festivals world wide and be used as an education and discussion tool by numerous COLAGE chapters. Already in 2006 the film has screened at festivals in Tucson, Arizona; Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane Australia; and at COLAGE events in Minneapolis, MN; Tulsa, OK; Poughkeepsie, NY; and Los Angeles, CA. As of the time of JFU's printing, *In My Shoes* has screened in at least 14 states across the country.

Individuals and institutions who want to own a copy of *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents* should visit Frameline's website for details: www.frameline.org. To learn more about the film or how you can use it to raise awareness in your community, visit www.colage.org/inmyshoes.

COLAGE EVENTS COMING NEAR YOU

Join us at an upcoming event.

For more information and details visit www.colage.org or contact Meredith Fenton, COLAGE Program Director.

April 1 *In My Shoes* Screening Peoria, IL

April 2 *That's So Gay* Exhibit Kickoff, St. Louis, MO. Co-sponsored with COLAGE St. Louis, Missouri ACLU, and PROMO.

April 16 Easter Egg Roll Visibility Event, Washington, DC. Co-sponsored with Family Pride Coalition and other partners

April 20 - 29 Act Up! Act Out COLAGE Youth Leadership and Action Program Theater Activism Camp, San Francisco, CA. An amazing opportunity for youth with LGBT parents and their allies to create an original theater piece about their experiences and to raise awareness in schools.

April 29th. Rainbow Families Conference, Minneapolis. Dynamic COLAGE Programming for middle and high school youth during this family event.

June 25 2006 LGBT Pride Celebration, Family Garden, San Francisco, CA. Cosponsored with Our Family Coalition.

July 8-13 Family Week Saugatuck. Saugatuck, MI. Co-sponsored with Rainbow Families Great Lakes.

July 29-August 5 Family Week Provincetown, Provincetown, MA. Hosted by Family Pride.

October 27-29 Act OUT: The National LGBT Family Conference. Dallas, TX. Co-sponsored with Family Pride, A do-not miss event for children, youth AND adults with LGBT parents – an amazing opportunity for community building and activism skill-building.

CHAPTER UPDATE: LOVE NEEDS NO CURE

COLAGE St. Louis just got started as a chapter in September of 2005. A group of adult COLAGERS, including an elementary school teacher and students from Washington University got together over the summer and decided that, it would be exciting to foster a community for youth with LGBT parents. About 10 families strong, our chapter has been meeting monthly and we have youth ranging in age from 3 years to 21 years! At our most recent activity, our families joined a local demonstration against a conference held in St. Louis that publicized homosexuality as an 'illness' that could be cured. The demonstration took on the motto that "love needs no cure." Our youth could be seen waving signs that read "Love makes our families," "Gay Parents Rock," and "Two Moms = Me." Meanwhile, at our chapter meetings our families are creating a giant COLAGE collage puzzle, made up of puzzle pieces that have been decorated by each member family. We hope to show this collage as a part of the upcoming community event of COLAGE's *That's So Gay* photo-text exhibit. This exhibit and art show will be displayed here in St. Louis at Central Reform Congregation on the corner of Washington Avenue and Kings Highway.

For more information about the St. Louis chapter, or to locate a chapter in your area, see our chapter listing on the back page.



Some St. Louis' COLAGERS hang out at a recent meeting.



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Chapters are autonomous local groups that affiliate with COLAGE and are self-run. We strive to keep updated on local contact information. If you have difficulty reaching the contact listed please let us know. Thank you.

Want to start a chapter in your community? Have questions? Please contact COLAGE at 415-861-KIDS or email colage@colage.org.